

possible, the same reference numbers will be used throughout the drawing to refer to the same or like parts.

[0036] The present invention provides a system and method for the effective control of the management materials process. Additionally, the invention provides an interface that allows the system to interact with a standard accounting system.

[0037] The Tubular Information Management System (TIMS) is presented to a user on a display. The main menu screen has several options for: (a) presenting the menu options; (b) displaying real-time inventory and sales information (security permitting); (c) displaying simple bar graphs of quote and sales achievements; (d) drilling-down on sales (sales invoice) and returns (customer returns).

[0038] The TIMS also comprises two major components. The first is a custom developed inventory and sales management system. The second component is a third party standard accounting system.

[0039] The TIMS inventory system consists of modules ranging from planning and purchase to sales and returns. The inventory system manages the inventory using both joints and feet (or other approved length units) as units of measure. When only a single unit of measure is known, a standard conversion value is used to produce the other. Inventory is maintained showing on-order, on-hand, available for sale, committed, and in-process quantities.

[0040] Most modules serve as a source for other modules. For example, the receiver module can be entered manually or called from the purchase order. When called from the purchase order, values are automatically carried forward minimizing the information that must be input

by the user. Received quantities are posted back to the originating purchase order to reflect receipt status. Another example is that the sales order can be generated manually from the quote or from the forecast modules. The sales order, in turn, generates one or more invoices. Invoices become the source for customer returns, etc. Most modules progress through several states. For example, the user plans the quantity to be processed, releases this material, and finally tallies inbound/outbound material (as required). Finally, when the transaction is judged complete, the user closes the transaction. The prior transaction values are then automatically adjusted to agree with the inbound tally total.

[0041] With reference to Fig. 1, a preferred embodiment of the system in accordance with the present invention includes a quote module (1) connected to a quote history (1a) and to a sales order (3). The quote module (1) permits TIMS to quote both inventory and non-inventory items. A quotation screen allows the salesperson to review previous quotes for the product being quoted. The salesperson can restrict the retrieved quotes by customer if desired. The quotation history identifies the sales order for any quote that subsequently becomes a sale. The sales order may be called from the quote history screen. In addition to the sales history, the current inventory of the product can be viewed. Optionally, the user can elect to see the newest purchase or the oldest remaining contract in inventory.

[0042] A cost/profit analysis screen can be called from the quote permitting the salesperson to review past sales of that product to determine the sales price, the cost of the sales, and the profit level. This information is presented for the past six months (further broken into three equal subintervals). This six-month default period can be changed to any time frame desired for a

longer/shorter view. The purpose of this module is to provide historical evidence in support of current quotes and sales activities. It displays prior sales (in dollars and percentages), cost of inventory sold, and profit for the specified period. Other historic information will be known to those skilled in the art and are within the scope of this invention.

[0043] A forecast module (2) connected to the sales order module (3) permits identification of planned sales (forecast) and the allocation of inventory to that forecast. The forecast module can initiate a sales order. The sales order module (3) includes general information about the sale, the products, charges, and services required to produce the end product. From the sales order module transactions such as fabrication, transfer, or inspection can be initiated. The sales order displays estimated profit in total and by product. The sales order can be used to initiate either a pre-paid or a regular invoice. The cost/profit function described above (quote) is also available from this module. The sales order can be initiated either manually, from a forecast, or from a quotation.

[0044] The invoice (4) generated by the sales order (3) can be either a pre-paid or a regular invoice. This invoice is referenced when a customer return is created, resulting in the pulling of data into the customer return. The customer return (5) is the mechanism by which material is returned by the customer and credit is given to the customer. The user identifies the invoice and invoice detail item numbers and the remainder of information is drawn from that source. The user completes a yard tally documenting the quantity and condition of the returned material. Additional charges may be documented that reduce the credit given the customer.